

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SUFFOLK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS,
RECREATION AND CONSERVATION
MINUTES OF AUGUST 21, 2014
SEARS BELLOWS COUNTY PARK
HAMPTON BAYS, NEW YORK**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Miles Borden	Trustee, Town of Smithtown
Gilbert Cardillo	Trustee, Town of Riverhead
Kathleen Gooding, Ph.D.	Vice Chair, Town of Shelter Island
Dawn Hopkins	Chair, Trustee, Town of Brookhaven
Debra Kolyer	Member of the Board
Peter Leis	Trustee, Town of Islip
William B. Sickles	Trustee, Town of Southampton
Richard F. White, Jr.	Trustee, Town of East Hampton

ABSENT

VACANT	Trustee, Town of Southold
Alexander McKay	Trustee, Town of Huntington
Terrence Pearsall	Member of the Board
Marisa Schifano	County Attorney's Office
VACANT	Trustee, Town of Babylon
VACANT	Member at Large

PARKS DEPARTMENT

Greg Dawson	Commissioner
Nick Gibbons	Principal Environmental Analyst
Barbara Rittman	Senior Clerk Typist

GUESTS

Christina DeLisi	Legislative Aide, Dep. Presiding Officer Jay Schneiderman
Hon. Al Krupski, Legislator	1 st Legislative District
Terence McSweeney	Pending Trustee, Town of Babylon
John Pavacic	Executive Director, Central Pine Barrens Commission
Christopher Pickerell	Director of Marine Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension

PUBLIC PORTION

There were no members of the public present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JULY 17, 2014

A motion to accept the minutes was made by Trustee Richard White and seconded by Trustee Kathleen Gooding. The minutes were unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.

**PRESENTATION BY JOHN PAVACIC, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CENTRAL PINE BARRENS COMMISSION**

John Pavacic distributed handout information explaining the various divisions and sub-regions that comprise the Central Pine Barrens, as well as illustrative maps. Director Pavacic explained that the Central Pine Barrens was

created in 1993. At one time, there were approximately 200 development projects occurring in that region. The Long Island Pine Barrens Society and other environmental groups brought suit against the developers and the various towns that had ongoing projects. They felt that there should be a comprehensive plan and a cumulative review of all of the development projects and their impacts on the Central Pine Barrens. Advocacy for the Pine Barrens began in the 1970's with nature walks and formal and informal scientific research studies. This culminated in the 1993 legislation which created The Principal Goals of the Long Island Pine Barrens Protection Act. One of the principal reasons for creating this was the fact that Long Island is situated over a sole drinking water resource. Unlike New York City or upstate, drinking water here on Long Island is gotten solely from the ground water. It is of utmost importance that whatever goes onto or into the ground doesn't end up in the drinking water, given concerns about contamination and over-consumption of ground water particularly in the western part of Long Island. As a result, it was decided that there was a great need to preserve the area above the aquifers as much as possible to protect the ground water resource for current and future generations. In addition, this area in New York State has one of the highest concentrations of rare and endangered plant and animal species in the entire United States. The Pine Barrens alone has a very rare and unique ecosystem.

The Long Island Pine Barrens Protection Act created a five member Commission which is comprised of the Towns of Southampton, Brookhaven and Riverhead, the Suffolk County Executive and an appointee selected by the Governor, Peter Scully, Regional Director of the DEC. The other four elected members can send their own appointees to Commission meetings. The Suffolk County Executive Steven Bellone's appointees are Director of Planning Sarah Lansdale, Janet Longo, of the Department of Environment & Energy and Andy Freleng, of the Planning Department. The Commission has several authorities and meets once a month. It has the combined duties of a Park Commission, Planning Commission and other regulatory authorities. The Commission oversees a comprehensive plan that regulates land use and development in the Central Pine Barrens and also has a Transfer of Development Rights Program. The Commission is based in Westhampton Beach and just celebrated its 20th anniversary last year.

The Central Pine Barrens Commission is aided by an Advisory Committee comprised of people from the development community, environmentalists, civic groups and the general public. They meet periodically to provide advice and input to the Commission. There is a Pine Barrens Credit Clearinghouse Board which oversees the credit program, the Protective Lands Council, the County Parks which oversees stewardship activities, the Law Enforcement Council, the Wildfire Taskforce and the New York Wildfire Management Academy.

The two main regions in the Central Pine Barrens are approximately 105,000 acres in size and are roughly divided in half. One-half is core preservation area and one-half compatible growth area. Development is not supposed to occur in the core preservation area and it is predominantly publicly owned land. The major land owners are Suffolk County Parks and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The compatible growth area is where existing and additional development can occur.

About two years ago, interest was expressed in providing additional protection for the Carmans River. There are four major rivers on Long Island which are the Connetquot, Nissequogue, Peconic and Carman Rivers. Two of those lie substantially within the Pine Barrens region, the Carmans and the Peconic. The vast majority of the Peconic River is protected because it is located within the core preservation area. However, portions of the Carmans River are located within the compatible growth area. An effort was initiated by the former Brookhaven Town Supervisor Mark Lesko to provide additional protection to the watershed area of the Carmans River, including both the surface and ground water. The Carmans River is one of the major sources of fresh water input to the Great South Bay and some very significant ecological plant and animal species, woodlands and ecosystems exist in this area. It was determined that the best way to protect these areas was to expand the Pine Barrens.

The Law Enforcement Council, comprised of the Suffolk County Sheriff, Suffolk County Police Department and Park Rangers have jurisdiction over the Central Pine Barrens region and they actively take part in the apprehension of those who illegally use all-terrain vehicles, dump garbage and vandalize areas in the Pine Barrens. There are very specific penalties for violations in this protected area.

The Science and Stewardship Division works with all of the land owning agencies in the Central Pine Barrens region, primarily through the Protective Lands Council. Some activities that are engaged in are ecological restoration, damage litigation, installation of ATV barriers, controlled burns, trail installation and maintenance, ecological inventories, and scientific research and studies.

The Master Plan is the Central Pine Barrens Comprehensive Land Use Plan which was adopted in 2005. A unique aspect of it is that each of the three towns (Brookhaven, Southampton and Riverhead) has Pine Barrens regulations (standards and guidelines) incorporated into the primary zoning codes. Once the towns created standards and guidelines, the Commission itself had to physically oversee very few development projects because most of the subdivisions are reviewed at the town level. There are exceptions occasionally and the Commission then considers granting a waiver.

COMMISSIONER'S REPORT

Commissioner Dawson thanked John Pavacic for offering to give an overview of the Central Pine Barrens Commission. Out of the 50,000 acres of Suffolk County Parkland, approximately half of it is in the Pine Barrens region so the two agencies work closely together and the Commissioner appreciates John's support and his very informative presentation. He thanked Joyce and Trustee William Sickles for hosting the August meeting at Sears Bellows County Park. He thanked Legislator Al Krupski and Legislative Aide to Deputy Presiding Officer Jay Schneiderman, Christina DeLisi for attending and representing their respective districts at the Parks Trustee meeting.

Commissioner Dawson asked Trustee and former Superintendent of Suffolk County Parks Bill Sickles to give a brief overview of Sears Bellows County Park. Trustee Sickles explained that Sears Bellows was the first park he worked in with the county as a seasonal employee. The park opened in 1967. The area where the pavilion is now located wasn't there back at that time and the area was completely wooded. The present Munn's Pond County Park, where the Wildlife Rescue Center is located in Hampton Bays is where the first camping site and picnic areas were located for Sears Bellows County Park. The 700 acre park was originally acquired in 1964 through the 1960 Park and Recreation Land & Acquisition Bond Act. There are several fresh water wetlands in the park and Bellows Pond is located right near the pavilion. Sears Pond is located nearby and is approximately 25 acres in size. Grass, House and Division Ponds are also located within the park. Today there are 100 campsites, 30 tent sites and 70 trailer and motor home sites. There is a youth group camping area for scouts and other groups such as the Civil Air Patrol. The pavilion is available for picnicking as well as several other areas for group and family picnics. Sears Bellows County Park was one of the first active county parks established, as well as Cedar Point in East Hampton, Southaven County Park, West Hills and Blydenburgh County Parks. Originally, near one of the beaches on the property there was an ice house that was owned by the Bellows Family. There was another family from the Bridgehampton area who also frequented the park with the last name Sayre and eventually the park came to be known as Sears Bellows.

Commissioner Dawson thanked Trustee Sickles for his presentation. He was happy to report that the Parks Department was able to re-open Smith Point County Park this season for outer beach access by August 1 and Cupsogue County Park on or about August 5th.

Golf attendance and revenue is considerably higher this year than last. The camping figures are also higher and figures at the beaches are fairly even with last year. Last year's beach figures are a result of considerable rain and this year's due to a lot of cool weather.

Flooding from the rain storm was primarily in central & western Suffolk, around the Islip area and a small part of Brookhaven. There was some flooding in a house located at Prosser Pines but a Parks crew took care of it and there was no structural damage to the building. The beaches opened late that day due to high surf which went right up to the pavilion at Smith Point, however no damage was reported.

PRESENTATION BY CHRISTOPHER PICKERELL, DIRECTOR OF MARINE PROGRAM
CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
CEDAR BEACH COUNTY PARK PROJECT

Christopher Pickerell stated that Cedar Beach County Park is a 68 acre park located in Southold, off Bayview Road. The Marine Program at Cornell Cooperative Extension opened a facility there in 1991 and set up a shellfish hatchery and marine education center. They spawn scallops, clams and oysters at the hatchery, hold environmental learning day camps for children, and researchers work on habitat restorations.

A large portion of the 68 acre Cedar Beach County Park was originally salt water marsh land. In 1928-29, the private owners of the property at that time dredged much of the creek system, changed the channel orientation and diked off the wetlands to create a large development complex. The development project fell through and most of the water that was cut off from the healthy salt marsh back then has been gradually degrading over time. It was determined that between 1930 and 2002, 8.5 acres of wetlands were directly lost at this site. The DEC wanted to see some restoration there and grant funding became available through the Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA and the National Estuary Program for a project to restore the marshes. It is planned that the project will restore approximately 8.5 acres of salt marsh, oyster habitat as well as native sea grass plant growth. The islands that were lost will be restored by bringing in sand fill to raise the surface elevation so that new native plants can grow. Local native plants will be used and local seeds from the area have already been propagated.

Nick Gibbons reported that Cornell has been in the park for many years but their role for this project will require entering into an MOU agreement that will be drafted by the Suffolk County Attorney and Cornell's attorney. Cornell attended a meeting of the Suffolk County Council on Environmental Quality to complete SEQRA. The county will work very closely in the future with Cornell as well as all the regulatory agencies that oversee and issue the permits for the work. The NYSDEC, the Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Town of Southold, a local bird habitat group, NOAA, the Peconic Estuary Program and Shellfish Restoration of Rhode Island are among those that will make contributions to the project. The project advisory committee will assist in overseeing the final project design and management, and will also follow-up with monitoring day to day progress.

The Commissioner and the County Attorney felt it appropriate to get feedback from the Parks Trustees for support or concerns since it would be a new type of relationship the County will have with Cornell. Christopher stated that the project will benefit residents, resident wildlife and fisheries.

A motion was made by Trustee Peter Leis to accept the Cedar Beach Restoration Project as presented by Cornell Cooperative Extension and was seconded by Trustee Gilbert Cardillo. It was unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.

CHAIR'S REPORT

Chair Dawn Hopkins thanked guest speakers John Pavacic and Christopher Pickerell for their interesting and very informative presentations.

ROUND TABLE

Trustee Kathleen Gooding thanked Joyce and Trustee William Sickles for the very delicious lunch, graciously hosting the Board of Trustees August meeting and she appreciated hearing about the interesting history of Sears Bellows County Park.

Trustee Sickles reported that he was informed that county employee Mark Miller would be retiring as of August 31st of this year, after working 30 years with Suffolk County Parks. Trustee Sickles worked with Mark Miller for 25 of the 30 years and he always found Mark to be very cooperative, even-tempered and feels certain that he will be missed very much. Any time his assistance was needed, Mark was always ready and willing to help.

John Pavacic thanked the group once again for allowing him to make his presentation. He reported that the New York Wildfire Incident Management Academy, in existence since 1998 offers training and some free courses for local government and local volunteer firefighters. Last year, it sponsored for the first time a brush truck training course to teach what is required by an operator on a brush truck at an actual fire incident. Courses are offered in fire response management, search and rescue, using social media for government and emergency situations, as well as courses for forest rangers and incident management. John had brochures on hand for anyone interested.

John also reported that Larry Hynes, a long time Suffolk County Parks employee is facing a very serious health issue. He started with the county as a Park Ranger, worked as Director of Security, and also worked for a short time for state parks. He currently works for the Central Pine Barrens Commission as a Compliance and Enforcement Coordinator. Larry will be out of the office for the next few months for medical treatments and John conveyed that cards, letters and phone calls from friends to wish him well would be welcomed and appreciated very much.

Legislator Krupski thanked Joyce and Trustee Sickles for the lunch and John Pavacic for his presentation on the Central Pine Barrens Commission. He inquired about the status of the removal of the Hellen Keller House, near Cedar Beach. Nick Gibbons reported that there are several permits required that are being worked on. There is a well that needs to be abandoned on the property and coordination with DPW is taking place. The County will then apply for a NYS DEC tidal wetlands permit and the project is moving forward. Another building on the property had been used as a rental and was flooded during Hurricane Sandy. Commissioner Dawson stated that proposals are being worked on to determine how much it would cost for the county to make the necessary repairs or to remove the building.

Legislator Krupski stated that he is looking into possibilities for septic system sites as alternatives to the traditional wastewater treatment facilities. He is open to suggestions for possible locations for pilot systems.

Christina DeLisi reported that Legislator Schneiderman plans to attend the next Parks Trustee meeting to be held at Montauk County Park. Christina thanked the Parks Department for assistance with some constituent concerns during the summer months which were quickly addressed.

Nick Gibbons reported on the preliminary final results of the plover nesting this summer. The total number of pairs last year was 34 pair and this year there were 37 pair. Last year, productivity was .85, meaning for every pair of birds, they raised .85 chicks to full age of fledge which is when the birds are sufficiently developed for flight. This year there were 1.38 chicks which is remarkable because the recovery goal set forth by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife in 1986 which was when the bird was originally listed was 1.5. Historically, the closer to consistently reaching 1.5 you get, the closer you get to de-listing the species as endangered. Smith Point had five pair last year and eight pair this year and was exactly 1.5 in productivity. The beach was reopened within a day of confirmation that the birds were gone and the season was considered a success in terms of productivity. Nick stated that Diana Sanford coordinates the program on a day to day basis and did an excellent job.

Commissioner Dawson commended both Nick and Diana for their hard work which included weekend time, and for handling the many calls from U.S. Fish & Wildlife who had a lot of oversight this year due to funding for the contingency plan.

Trustee Gil Cardillo had inquired previously about an issue with the restrooms at Indian Island County Park. Vandals set fire to rolls of toilet paper in the restrooms and temporary porto-sans needed to be installed until repairs could be completed. Thankfully, there was no structural damage to the building.

Trustee Miles Borden was very appreciative of the excellent presentations. He commented on the Firematic training that John Pavacic spoke of and stated that he recalled the major Pine Barren fires that occurred almost twenty years ago. He recalled that one of the things that was so difficult for many volunteer departments to realize back at the time was that you don't fight Pine Barrens type fires in the same way you would fight structural fires.

Terence McSweeney inquired about the lighting that the town had received a grant for at Van Bourgondien County Park. Commissioner Dawson stated he would get back to him.

The next meeting will be held at Montauk County Park – Third House on Thursday, September 18, 2014.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Trustee Richard White and was seconded by Trustee Gilbert Cardillo. The motion was unanimously approved by a vote of 8-0-0.